

Message Text

SECRET

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1731
INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

S E C R E T KUALA LUMPUR 6687

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SN, MY
SUBJ: RECOMMENDATIONS OF USAF STUDY TEAM

REF: SINGAPORE 4845

1. THIS MESSAGE RESPONDS TO POINTS RAISED IN PARA 5 OF REFTEL.
2. THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON SINGAPORE USE OF MALAYSIAN AIRSPACE AND TRAINING FACILITIES REFLECT A CERTAIN LEVEL OF MISTRUST, BUT WE DETECT NO SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF TENSION IN GOM-GOS RELATIONS AT PRESENT. ON CONTRARY, THE GENERAL TREND IS IN OPPOSITE DIRECTION CARRIED ALONG BY ASEAN CONTACTS AND CLOSE COLLABORATION IN NON-POLITICO-MILITARY FIELDS. WE DON'T MEAN TO SUGGEST THERE ARE NO FRICTIONS, BUT ON BOTH ENDS OF THE CAUSEWAY THERE ARE MANY SENSIBLE PRAGMATIC PEOPLE WHOSE ATTITUDE IS "POLITICS-SCHMOLITICS, -WHO CARES IF YOU CAN MAKE A BUCK."

3. IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, WE FIND LITTLE DISPOSITION HERE TO SEE SINGAPORE AS A MILITARY THREAT. WE DO NOT HEAR FROM OUR GOM FRIENDS ON EITHER THE CIVILIAN OR MILITARY SIDE, ANY INDICATIONS OF CONCERN ABOUT OUR SALE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SINGAPORE. THE MALAYSIANS FEEL SECURE IN THEIR POLITICO-ETHNIC ASSOCIATION WITH INDONESIA. THE EMERGENCE OF THE ISLAMIC GROUPING AS A POWER-FACTOR HAS INCREASED THIS SENSE OF SECURITY.

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4. THE ASSIGNMENT OF SEVEN USAF OFFICERS TO ADVISE THE SINGAPORE

AIR FORCE WOULD NOT, THEREFORE, IN OUR JUDGEMENT INCREASE TENSION IN GOM-GOS RELATIONS OR CAUSE SINGAPORE TO BE REGARDED AS A MILITARY THREAT. THE ACTION WOULD, HOWEVER, NOT BE WELCOMED BECAUSE IT WOULD BE SEEN ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL AS A RETROGRESSIVE STEP IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASEAN ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY AND AS AN UNDESIRABLE NEW INVOLVEMENT OF A MAJOR OUTSIDE POWER IN THE MILITARY AFFAIRS OF THE REGION.

5. THE ADVERSE IMPACT WOULD THEREFORE BE MORE LIKELY TO BE FELT IN THE ASEAN ASSOCIATION AND IN US-GOM BILATERAL RELATIONS. (WOULD PM LEE MAKE IT CLEAR TO HIS ASEAN PARTNERS THAT THE REQUEST FOR USAF ASSISTANCE CAME ENTIRELY AT HIS REQUEST AND INITIATIVE?) THE RATIONALE FOR A U.S. INTEREST IN IMPROVING THE COMMAND AND STAFFING CAPABILITIES OF THE RSAF IS NOT SELF-EVIDENT, AND THERE WOULD BE SPECULATION ON WHAT THE U.S. WOULD BE GETTING IN RETURN. HERE AGAIN WE WOULD NOT EXPECT STRIDENT OBJECTIONS, BUT THE NET EFFECT ON OUR RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIA WOULD BE NEGATIVE.

6. THE EFFECT ON ASEAN IS MORE DIFFICULT TO JUDGE, BUT TO AVOID AN ACTION WHICH MIGHT BE DIVISIVE IN THIS IMPORTANT REGIONAL ASSOCIATION, WE RECOMMEND THAT EMBASSY JAKARTA BE BROUGHT INTO THIS QUESTION AND ITS VIEWS SOUGHT ON THE INDONESIAN REACTION TO A USAF ADVISORY TEAM.
UNDERHILL

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